The Watchman and Southron.

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Beatrix Randolph.

By JULIAN HAWTHORNE.

[CONTINUED.]

SYNOPSIS.

IN CHAPTER 1 Gen Inigo, a prominent impresario, confides to Hamilton Jocelyn, a man about town, that Marana, a Russian prima donna, engaged at enormous expense to open his new opera house in New York, has cabled that she cannot keep her contract. Jocelyn offers to find an acceptable substitute at once.

CHAPTER 2 introduces to the reader Beatrix Randolph, a thoroughly trained amateur, possessing a remarkable voice and struggling under financial and social reverses. She lives with her widowed father on heavily incumbered estates up the Hudson.

CHAPTER 3 brings Gen. Inigo and Jocelyn, who is an old acquaintance of the Randolphs, to their retired homestead, and Beatrix is engaged at a large salary to impersonate Marana, using the Russian's name.

IN CHAPTER 4 Mr. Geoffrey Bellingham, a rising young architect, who is superintending work on the new opera house, suggests some changes to Gen. Inigo and wins a high compliment.

IN CHAPTER 5 Jocelyn, acting as a friend of all concerned, arranges temporary quarters for Beatrix in New York and secures a chaperon for her, inadvertently showing himself to be a man of shady antecedents, living by his wits.

CHAPTER 6 brings the heroine, in the assumed character of Marana, before New York society. She meets Geoffrey Bellingham at a dinner given in her honor by a rich patron of the muses.

IN CHAPTER 7 the new diva finds herself among friends, enemies and lovers, and sufferers annoyances common to novices and peculiar to the operatic stage. Jocelyn and Inigo quarrel and the former is accused of having a mercenary interest in Beatrix.

IN CHAPTER 8 the new Marana appears in her first performance and is "crowned queen of New York for the sake of two or three hours' sweet singing." In the midst of the triumphs her thoughts are on Bellingham, with whom she shares her happiness. On her part, however, this happiness is not without alloy because of the deception she is practicing before him. Her father now arrives in New York.

IN CHAPTER 9 Geoffrey Bellingham meets Mr. Randolph in a social way and has some suspicions aroused. He afterward witnesses familiarities between father and daughter, which, of course, he cannot understand, and seeks explanation from the diva. These she declines to make. Afterward Bellingham sees Beatrix embrace her father as she leaves her carriage at the stage door.

CHAPTER 10—Overborne with chagrin and jealousy Bellingham sails for Europe, where he meets Edward Randolph, the spendthrift brother of Beatrix and author of her father's financial distress, escorting the real Marana on a tour of pastime. The news from America has stirred the wrath of the pleasure loving pair, and young Randolph denounces Inigo and his spurious Marana, threatening exposure and prosecution. Bellingham advises him to return to New York and look after his father, taking Marana with him.

CHAPTER 11—Jocelyn, finding his rival, Bellingham, out of the way becomes bold and forces his attentions upon Beatrix. In the end she dismisses him from her presence.

CHAPTER 12 brings Bellingham back to New York, and also brings young Randolph and the real Marana. Bellingham meets father and son together, and has reason to suspect the identity of Inigo's diva.

IN CHAPTER 13 Marana asserts her love for Edward Randolph and her power over him, and declares her purpose to force reparation from Beatrix.

CHAPTER XIV.

HOW THEY WERE LOST IN THE STORM.

"So you have returned, Mr. Bellingham!"

From the Albemarle to Wallie's house was not a long distance, but it had begun to snow, and the keen northerly wind drove the flakes straight into the faces of the pedestrians and afforded Wallie a good excuse for keeping his mouth shut, or opening it only for monosyllabic answers to the questions which Ed from time to time addressed to him. With all his pains he had undoubtedly bungled the interview with the Russian star—just at the juncture, too, when he was beginning to entertain the best hopes of success. How swiftly and effectively she had turned the tables upon him! What terrible versatility and self command she had! With what a wicked roguishness had she fired that parting taunt at him about his motive in espousing her rival's cause! "At any rate I'm glad I let her have the last word!" said Wallie to himself; but that was somewhat cold comfort.

He left Ed in the drawing room and went to find Mrs. Cadwalader and Beatrix. He sent the latter to her brother and remained in conference with the former.

Beatrix came softly into the drawing room and saw Edward standing near the farther end of it with his back toward her. She paused, and remained motionless, gazing at him. Her heart went out toward him, and yet she shrank from him. She wished to be in full sympathy with him, but Marana seemed to stand between them. For when she had learned from Geoffrey's letter to Wallie that Marana was Ed's companion she had been forced to the conclusion that the relation between them must be an unlawful one, and the circumstance that Marana, rather than any other woman, should be the person holding this position had affected her with a peculiar horror. There seemed to be something wantonly repugnant in it. She might have prevented herself from definitely realizing the fact had a stranger to herself been involved; but Marana!—she had lived under her name and occupied her place so long as to make her feel that she was in some way personally mixed up in the catastrophe.

In a few moments Ed turned round and saw his sister.

The personal magnetism of eye to eye with those who are really dear to each other overcomes, for the time being, all scruples and recoilings. When, therefore, her brother gave a glad start, and stepped toward Beatrix with an inarticulate exclamation of affection, she forgot everything except that he was her brother, with whom she had spent her childhood, who had cut his initials on the banister of the old staircase, whose white roses she had worn on her bosom until within the last few months, by whose side she had ridden, and in whose company she had ransacked the woods; she found herself with her arms round his neck, kissing him, smiling with wet cheeks, and murmuring: "Dear Ed! dear, darling boy! Oh, I am so glad to have you again!"

"How well you are looking, sis!" he said at length, taking her by the elbows and looking at her. She was, indeed, beautifully dressed, and her face was rosy with the emotion of the moment, and, passion aside, he cared more for her than for any one else, but he had not the eyes to discern the traces of fatigue and anxiety on her face; it takes a lover to do that. When a man looks at his sister he thinks of the past; when he looks at his mistress he thinks of the present and the future.

"Why, but you're a great swell now, aren't you?" Ed continued laughingly. His temperament varied quickly, and without any moral reason, between extremes of depression and joviality. "I had no idea my little sis was going to come out on the top of the heap this way. I always said nobody could beat you singing, though, and nobody can, though Vera is perfect in her way, too."

"Vera?" she repeated, glancing up quickly.

"That's her name—Vera Marana. Ah, my dear, I've got a heap to tell you about her! By the way," he said, laughing, "people here, I suppose, think you know more about Marana than any one else. Well, you do look a little like her—that's what first made me look at her. But I want you to know her; I'm certain you'd take to each other. She's the dearest woman in the world, and as generous and good as she is lovely."

"Good?" repeated Beatrix, whose face during this speech had run through a gamut of expressions and now rested in bewilderment.

"Good! I should think so. Do you imagine I'd want you to know her if she wasn't everything a lady should be, and a great deal more? You ought to have heard the way I sailed into poor old dad just now for calling her names. I guess he won't do it again!"

Beatrix clapped her hands together under her chin with a cry of almost hysteric joy, and instantly embraced her brother again with all the added ardor that can be given to affection by remorse. She had wickedly wronged him by allowing herself to imagine, even for a moment, that he or anybody connected with him could ever be anything but patterns of honesty and virtue. For fear of making bad worse she forbore to explain to him the cause of her sudden demonstrativeness; he should be made conscious of her repentance only by the tenderness and observance which she would lavish upon him. The thought came into her mind also that, by her love for her brother, she could in some degree compensate herself for the loss of her other love—for she told herself that it was lost, and had been repeating the statement with tenfold diligence ever since learning that Geoffrey had returned to New York.

Ed, who was never particularly observant of the feelings of others, except when his own feelings were bound up in them, passed over all this little tumult of emotion without any suspicions, and, in response to his sister's eagerly expressed interest in the subject, talked about himself and his affairs to the heart's content of both speaker and listener. He no longer felt the humiliation and helplessness of his position so keenly as an hour ago. The companionship of this sister, whom he had so recklessly impoverished, and to whose energy and genius he was under such weighty obligations, insensibly began to put him in better humor with himself and his prospects. It is not difficult to take a reassuring view of our conduct when our natural bias thereto is stimulated by the sympathy of one who emphasizes the significance of all the favorable features and brushes out of sight all the ungainly ones.

Ed gave his sister a picturesque and stirring account of his first meeting with Marana, their mutual captivation, what she had said, what he had answered, what she had answered, and what he had said. He made it appear plainly that his spending a hundred thousand dollars was a proceeding rather meritorious and self-sacrificing than otherwise, inasmuch as it would have been unworthy a Randolph not to make a splendid appearance in the eyes of the woman he loved, and amidst such rivals as those with whom he had to contend; and, moreover (as he truly observed), he himself was the worst off of any of the family when the money was gone. "And of course," he added, "I had no idea at what a rate I was going it; I declare, sis, I never was more floored than when dad wrote me that we were 'ruined by my criminal extravagance,' as he put it. Besides, we shouldn't have been ruined at all if he hadn't gone blundering down into Wall street. That's the way the money went, after all, and I can't help suspecting the old gentleman is as much to blame as I am."

"Well, dear, that's all right now; and I'm glad the money was gone, since it gave me a chance to help. But, Oh, Ed! do you think Mlle. Marana minds much? She can't think worse of me for doing it—in that way, I mean—than I do of myself; but what should we have done, you see, if I hadn't done it?"

"I don't blame you a bit, sis—remember that!" her brother replied. "I'm proud of you; there's not another girl in the country who could succeed as you have. And it's a great deal pleasanter for me to come home and find the bills paid than if I'd found you all living in the poorhouse—which was what I expected. All I'm sorry for is—however," he broke off magnanimously, "that can't be helped. It's only my luck!"

"Dearest boy! do tell me everything!"

Ed heaved a sigh. The sense of his misfortunes, dispelled for a time by the animation of his self vindication and anecdotes, now returned upon him. "I'm the most unlucky devil alive, and there's no use talking about it," he declared despairingly.

"Oh, Ed! if you can be married what greater happiness could there be?" said his sister, with a suppressed sigh for her own unimportant misery.

"Exactly! but we can't."

"Oh, you can! Who says not? Don't ever let anything prevent you!" Beatrix exclaimed with great energy. There is sometimes a bitter consolation in urging upon others conduct which we would fain embrace ourselves. "If you love a person everything is right and wise, except to let yourself be parted from them. But that is almost wicked!"

"What must be must!" responded Ed in a still more hopeless tone, but not without a secret hope that some method might be devised to escape the inevitable.

Beatrix paused, thinking intently, and with increasing agitation.

"I believe I know what you mean," she said at last, with a deep undertone of sad affection in her voice. "You think you ought not to marry her because I am your sister—that is, because I have wronged her. Oh, Ed, that is it! You can't deny it, dear. You would sacrifice all your happiness so as not to seem to take her part against me. I might have known that it could be nothing less noble than that; but it shall not be—you must not dream of it! When she knows how sorry I am—and she shall know—everybody shall know it! I'll tell you how it shall be," she continued, springing up from the sofa on which they were sitting together, and pacing up and down, passing the fingers of one hand at intervals over her forehead and hair. At length she stopped in front of him.

"To-morrow evening is my last performance," she said. "After it is over I will ask Gen. Inigo to tell the audience, or perhaps it would be better if I went out and told them myself, all the whole story, how I came to take her place, and who I really am, and all! After that she will forgive me; I'll make her forgive me for your sake; and then, Ed, dear," she concluded with a misty smile and a tremor of the lip, "you need not be afraid to make her my sister!"

"It's splendid of you to think of such a thing, dear little sis!" exclaimed her brother, drawing her down to him and kissing her. "But it would never do to go to work in that way; in the first place it might knock all your popularity on the head. The public doesn't understand generous and elevated conduct as I do."

"No matter if they don't understand it. I have already made up my mind to one thing. I shall never sing on the stage after to-morrow."

"What a notion! See if you don't."

"No, indeed. I had decided on that before—before I knew anything about your affairs, you dear boy! The debts are paid, and papa and I can live in the old house again, and that is all I ever meant to do. Being on the stage is not pleasant in some ways, and besides—well, at any rate I'm determined, and when I am determined I never change; and I will tell the audience so to-morrow night."

"No, no! I tell you," cried Ed, becoming lively again, "if singing won't do for you on the stage speechifying's out of the question. You'd be like these women's rights geese. There's no necessity for it, either. If Vera knew that you wouldn't feel hurt at my marrying her I dare say she'd come round all right. The only difficulty then would be that I should seem to be, in a certain way, dependent on her. But I have been thinking the last few days that I'd go into some profession—engineering, or architecture, or something of that kind—and then I guess I could be making money enough in a year or two to take the edge off the thing. I'm not a fool, sis, though maybe I have acted rather like one."

"You are the dearest and best brother in the world," said Beatrix, with the gentleness of profound conviction; and on the heels of this moderate statement Wallie Dinsmore came into the room and invited Edward to sit down to a cold lunch with him. "The ladies would not wait for us," he observed, "and it would be foolhardy for us to wait for dinner. Of course Miss Randolph and Mrs. Dinsmore will pour out our beer for us."

Edward assented; but Beatrix, after a moment's hesitation, excused herself on some feminine plea, and, refusing any escort or offer of a carriage, set out on foot toward her home, as she had accustomed herself to call it. The evening was now at hand, though it lacked something of 4 o'clock. The sidewalks were covered with a drifting layer of white, and the flakes still swirled and dangled downward from the obscure blankness overhead. As Beatrix, walking briskly, approached Madison square the frigid glare of the electric lamp, from the summit of its immense mast, marked itself out on the storm like a gigantic tent of light.

Warmly wrapped in her fur lined cloak Beatrix did not mind the snow and wind; they gave her a kind of pleasure; she felt strengthened and heartened by the robust pungency of the atmosphere. It reminded her of her winters in the old place far up the Hudson—the days of frozen forests and gigantic snowballs, and the long icicles hanging from the eaves on the southwest corner. Well, her work was all but done, and she might begin that life again as soon as she pleased. But could that life ever begin again for her? After all the events and experiences of this season could she, in a moment, become Beatrix Randolph once more? Had not the name of Marana carried some spell with it, whose effects would never leave her? As she speculated thus, and her heart began to sink again, she turned the corner of Fifth avenue and came into collision with a gentleman who was proceeding swiftly in the opposite direction.

Her head was bent, her veil was over her eyes, the air was full of snow and the confusing dazzle of street lights; it was impossible that she should know who this man was, and yet she did know at once, and she even fancied that she had anticipated the meeting a moment before it occurred. And, first, a great wave of joy seemed to swell and murmur in her heart, and then she called to mind all manner of unwelcome and crippling considerations, and drew herself together in a defensive attitude. Physically she stopped, breathing quickly, and removing one hand from her muff to keep down her veil. She thought he would perhaps not recognize her. But a man can recognize the woman he loves by a glimpse of the movement of her shoulder far off in a crowd—nay, by the toss of the feather in her hat. The magic of love consists mainly in its stimulating us to use our senses; and then we are surprised to discover what a marvelous capacity and keenness those senses have. The heavenly intelligence of angels can only be the result of the depth and ardor of their power to love.

"Mademoiselle"—he began, and stopped, for he had never called her by her real name, and though he knew now what it was it had no personal association with her in his mind. "I was going to find you," he continued.

"I was not lost. So you have returned, Mr. Bellingham?"

"I must speak to you, Miss Randolph!"

"Is it necessary on this corner? A singer must be careful of her throat, you know."

"Take my arm. I'll get a hack for you."

"Thank you; I am doing very well."

She walked on and he walked beside her. The facilities for conversation were certainly not good, even had the readiness been there. He was six or seven inches taller than she, and he was obliged to stoop and speak loud in order to insure her hearing him, while he was in danger of missing or misinterpreting the muffled murmur of her replies. But there was in Bellingham a great deal of constancy and concentration of purpose.

"I don't expect you to forgive me," he said. "Only understand that I can never forgive myself. Such a blunder should have been impossible to a man who felt toward you as I did. If I had been worth your caring for I should not have made it."

"It was natural; you could not have done anything else; I do not blame you," said Beatrix through her veil. Geoffrey did not wholly catch her words; he understood her to say that such a mistake was only to be expected of him, and his face fell. She perceived the change in him, and faltered out, "I mean that I do forgive you!" But a Fifth avenue stage, rattling by just then, drowned this sentence altogether.

"I don't mean to persecute you," he remarked, speaking in a monotonous tone, as they walked onward side by side. "I didn't return from Europe for that; I merely wanted you to know. I used to think that, whatever happened, I could always think and act like a man who believed in goodness and—purity. But I failed at the important moment, and you may be right—it was only natural in me. For a long time—many years—before I met you I had nothing to do with women, and thought as little as possible about them. You seemed to me, when I first saw you, everything that I most wanted, and, at the same time, everything that I most disliked. It was the contradiction between what I felt you were and what I thought you were. That began with our first evening and went on exaggerating itself until the end. That's my story, Miss Randolph. After all it's only a long way of saying, 'I made a mistake and beg your pardon.'"

Beatrix heard all this, and the more she heard the more tormented she felt and the faster she tried to walk; but the sidewalks were slippery, and at last in crossing the street her foot slipped, and she would have fallen if Geoffrey had not caught her arm. She stopped, pressing her hands, which were clasped inside her muff, against her heart, and glancing this way and that, like a bird that knows not which way to fly. She was in just such a half frantic, half hopeless mood as often prompts women to acts which appear—and perhaps really are—insane. She knew that on the passing moment depended probably the failure or success, the happiness or misery, of her whole future life. She knew that everything was going topsy-turvy, absurdly and gratuitously wrong. And she felt paralyzed—wholly unable to utter a word to set everything right. A word would have done it. What prevented her? In part, perhaps, the very urgency of her desire, which tripped up its performance.

But what appeared to be the real obstacles were utterly trivial material accidents, such as being in the open street, being buffeted by the wind, being obstructed by her veil, being unable to see the expression of Bellingham's face, because it was in shadow. The more despicably small the hindrances were, and the more out of proportion with the thing they were hindering, the less could Beatrix prevail against them. So it often seems to be in this world; it is not only that the mountain in labor brings forth a mouse, but that a mouse prevents the bringing forth of a mountain.

Bellingham also was wretchedly aware that he had ruined whatever little chance he may have had; that he had spoken boldly and perfunctorily, with a frozen tongue, although his heart was on fire. He could not help it; he could have died for her on the spot, but he could not put into his voice or face as much life as would have kept a gnat in motion. It was all over.

"Will you stop this stage for me, please?" Beatrix had said as another of those gorgeous vehicles came swinging and lumbering along.

"With pleasure!" Bellingham replied, not ironically, but mechanically. The stage pulled up; he handed all he loved in the world up the step; he saw her fall into a seat, and then, with a jerk and a hoof clatter, stage and all disappeared in the gloom and snow. Bellingham remained for a few moments in the middle of the road like a policeman till, recollecting himself, he saw before him the hospitable entrance of Delmonico's, and went in there.

CHAPTER XV.

THE GREAT MARANA.

The next night was the last of the opera season, and the prima donna who had attained such unexampled popularity with the New York public was to bid them farewell in the same character in which she had made their acquaintance—the Gretchen of "Faust." She had intended to spend the day as much as possible in solitude; she wished to think—to work into her mind and arrange the throng of ideas that were crowding one another there; to review what was past, to contemplate what might be to come. But it all turned out differently. She was allowed no repose from morning till night.

There was a multitude of petty matters to attend to, many people to see: at another time much of this might have seemed to her of no little importance; but now all passed before her like a troublesome dream, and when night came she could not have given a clear account of anything that had happened. There had been an unexpected and painful scene with Madame Bemax, who had fallen into a sort of frenzy, and grasped the skirts of Beatrix's dress, and poured forth a long and revolting story about the wrongs she had endured from Hamilton Jocelyn; had ended by calling herself a wretch, and declaring that unless Beatrix pardoned her she would kill herself.

Beatrix pardoned her immediately, with only a confused understanding of what she was pardoning her for; but she could see that the woman was in great distress of mind, and that was something she could sympathize with. She had seen Ed and her father and Wallie Dinsmore; there had been a great deal of discussion and some disputing, ending apparently in a sort of conditional reconciliation; but she had been unable to keep her attention fixed on the subject long enough at a time to comprehend the bearings of it. She had also seen Inigo, who was in an agitated frame of mind, jumping up from his chair and sitting down again twenty times, asking questions which he tried to answer himself, talking about his reputation, about his fidelity to his contracts, about his financial liberality and about Mlle. Marana, whom he alternately abused and praised, and between whom and Beatrix he seemed anxious to bring about an interview. Beatrix was willing, even desirous, that the interview should take place; but nothing of the sort happened, and the inference was that Mlle. Marana must have declined.

Altogether the evening fell ominously. But as Beatrix drove to the theatre in a covered sleigh a kind of calmness, almost happiness, came over her. These regular meetings with her audiences had grown to be an indescribable resource and support to her. They enabled her to throw aside herself and her affairs; to appeal from the narrow and interested circle of

Simply caught Beatrix in his arms and kissed her.

her private friends and enemies to the vast, impersonal, careless, good humored world of the public, who loved and applauded her artistic self, and knew and cared nothing about her real thoughts and existence. How would it be when this resource no longer remained to her? She put that question aside, and the porter at the stage entrance, who attached great importance to the smile of greeting he received each evening from the diva, reported on this occasion that the dear lady had seemed to be in especially good spirits. Moreover she had slipped into his hand a snuff box (he was a Hanoverian and took snuff) containing, not snuff, but a $50 bank note.

A few hours before the theatre opened Wallie Dinsmore had met Geoffrey Bellingham in that general rendezvous of American celebrities the corridor of the Fifth Avenue hotel.

"I've been looking for you for the last twenty-four hours," he said, "but this is the last place I expected to see you in."

"Maybe that's why I'm here," responded Geoffrey laconically.

"I wanted you to dine with me yesterday."

"I went to Delmonico's."

"Europe has demoralized you."

"Perhaps. I saw Hamilton Jocelyn there, and Inigo. That fellow's a scoundrel."

"Inigo?"

"Jocelyn. Do you know what he has been doing? They had both of them been drinking and it leaked out. He has been defrauding Miss Randolph of a part of her salary—about twenty-five or thirty thousand dollars."

"Then the agreement was for four thousand?"

"Inigo paid that to Jocelyn for her. Jocelyn kept back part. It seems to have been a sort of arrangement between Jocelyn and Inigo—I imagine Inigo allowed it to keep Jocelyn quiet. It was a rascally transaction, as I told them; the fellow ought to be locked up. He's not to be found today, and I expect he's cleared out."

"Very likely. That Mme. Bemax seems to have had something against him, too. But if this new Marana can only be pacified I shall be content to let the rest go. Of course you will be at the opera to-night?"

"No."

"That's absurd! You must come."

"No; why should I? You have chosen to suppose that there was something between Miss Randolph and me. I never cared to undeceive you—it would have been giving the affair too much importance. But, whatever there might have been, there is certainly nothing now, nor ever will be."

"If I was deceived then I don't see why you refuse to come to-night."

"I simply don't care to," said Bellingham abruptly.

Wallie looked at him, and decided that the wisest course would be not to press him any further. They parted, and Bellingham went to his rooms, lit a lamp, and sat himself down to read. But when the hour for the performance approached he closed the book, dressed himself, and drove to the theatre. He could not resist this impulse. When he arrived the overture was just concluding. "I shall not be able to get a place," he said to himself; "it is just as well." But when he presented himself at the ticket office the clerk, who recognized him, remarked with a smile, "Just one seat vacant, Mr. Bellingham, and that is the one you used to occupy the first of the season; will you have it?" It seemed like manifest destiny. "All right," said Bellingham. He took the ticket, entered the house, and sat down. As he did so the curtain rose.

The interval between this night and the one on which he had last been here enabled him to draw a comparison between the Gretchen of the debut and this of the farewell. There was a sentimental feeling perceptible among the audience. The American people are fond of sentiment, when managed dramatically; and this, no doubt, had its effect on the singer, and warmed and sweetened the music of her voice. But, such accidents aside, it was evident that she had improved, though precisely in what respect Bellingham would have found it difficult to say. Her manner was less exuberant, more concise and true. She had learned her power and her resources, and used them with full confidence and art.

In her singing, moreover, could be discerned not the music merely, but the human character which the poet portrayed. When she was on the stage it was difficult to realize the separate existence of anything else; wherever she stood she was the center and reason of the scene. Every gesture and movement was an enlightenment and a gratification. She was always where she belonged. Each thing she did so nicely fitted the occasion that the spectator fancied he had known beforehand that it would so be done. "This is what she was born for," said Bellingham to himself with gloomy frankness. "I should only have been in the way. I'm glad I came here, if only to have made sure of that. Such a woman should no more be monopolized and caged in domesticity than a waterfall or a strain of music. The mischief of it is that I did not recognize the fact before."

As he sat absorbed in her, and happy in spite of his unhappiness, he noticed that she carried in her girdle a bunch of marguerites. The discovery gave him a gradual start, so to say; he became only slowly aware how much it surprised and affected him. He had always provided her with a bunch of them, whenever she sang in "Faust," from the first day onward; often not without difficulty, for daisies do not grow in northern meadows all the year round. Had she, during his absence, been procuring them for herself, or was this the first occasion of her wearing them since he went away? The former was much the more likely. Actresses become accustomed to little particulars of the toilet, and are not at ease without them. Nevertheless Bellingham could not banish the notion that the latter alternative might be the true one. Did he believe it because he wished it? Why should he wish it? It was useless to torment himself with such questions.

In matters appertaining to Miss Randolph he seemed to be swayed by an influence, a fate, an attraction, almost independent of his own will and reason. What could be more unreasonable than to suppose that this bunch of marguerites was a secret signal to him to come to her, to speak with her, to be once more all that he had been to her—and more? Had not that interview in last evening's snow storm put an end to all such anticipations? But, again, was this the same woman who had vanished from him in the 'bus on that occasion? With so much difference in her surroundings was there none in her? Well, she had betrayed no consciousness of his presence to-night. They had exchanged no glance, as sometimes in the former days. After it was said and done, however, Bellingham knew that he should find himself behind the scenes, face to face with her, before the night was over.

Inigo, by what he considered a bold stroke of statesmanship, had placed one of the stage boxes at the disposal of Mlle. Marana, known as Mrs. Peters. "If she means to make a row," he argued, "treating her gentlemanly won't make it worse, and it may just tone her down a little." But, whatever the lady may have thought of the compliment, she omitted to avail herself of the box. When the curtain rose she had not arrived, and the box remained empty all the evening. This was of evil omen to the peace and friendly feeling which Gen. Inigo was so solicitous to insure. He resorted frequently to the bar, though with no good effect on his anxiety.

"Now, what the blazes can she be up to, eh?" he frequently asked himself and the elder Randolph, as the hours passed away. He seemed to think she was quite capable of coming into the house with a Nihilist bomb, by way of expressing her dissatisfaction. As for Ed he knew as little about her as any one else, though he had learned, before coming down to the theatre, that she was not in her rooms at the hotel. She had gone out, but had not left word where she was going.

The audience seemed determined on this night to surpass all previous demonstrations of enthusiasm. A cynic might have said that they had set their hearts on reading in the next morning's papers that the applause and floral tributes which greeted the great singer on the eve of her departure from our shores were such as to outdo anything hitherto experienced. The popular favorite was summoned innumerable times before the curtain, and at the conclusion of the performance— But before the conclusion of the performance some events happened which did not appear in the papers, but which it will be necessary to relate.

As the curtain descended upon the last act but one Gen. Inigo, who was in the side scenes, received a card, which seemed to have upon him an effect as of a strong charge of electricity. He ran precipitately to the private door communicating between the house and the stage, where a lady was standing much muffled up. She wore a black dress and cloak, and her head and shoulders were enveloped in a white lace shawl. She let this fall open as Inigo approached, and disclosed the features of Vera Marana. She laughed good naturedly, and gave him her hand, which he covered with kisses, while his eyes devoured her with astonishment and interrogation.

"Well, M. Moses," said she, "what are you so affectionate for? Have you pardoned me?"

"Pardoned! Ah! diva! By Jupiter! Did you just come?"

"I was here from the first, but not in the box—no; one cannot hear there. I was away among the common ones. It was necessary I should know what she could do—this young lady—this other self! Well, mon ami, you may compose yourself. I have heard her, [illegible] I wish to see her—speak to her. Conduct me where she is and then leave us. Is any one with her?"

"Only her brother. Shall I"——

"Bien, bien! Lead on, mon vieux, I am in a hurry."

When he had brought her to the door of Beatrix's room she made him depart, and then knocked at the door. It was opened by Ed. She made him a gesture at once of greeting and of silence, and advanced into the room, which was filled with flowers. Beatrix was reclining on her sofa with a sad and abstracted expression; but as she raised her eyes and met those of her visitor she sat erect, and the next moment rose to her feet. "You are—Marana!" she said in an inward tone. The two women gazed intently at each other, and there was silence for several seconds. At last the visitor said: "I had thought I was Marana until now. But now, mademoiselle, the name is yours by the right that you have made it more honorable."

"Oh, no—no!" the other murmured.

"Yes, yes, yes!" said Marana, with a smile, which, however, was quickly lost in the gravity of her reigning expression. "You have surprised me," she continued, after a pause; "I did not mean to forgive you! I was angry. But your voice has called my heart out of my bosom. There is no one who can sing like you—no one—not even I!"

The tone in which these words were uttered—dignified, but profoundly pathetic, as of a great queen discrowning herself—touched Beatrix to the soul and her eyes filled with tears. She shook her head, but she could not speak. After all there was a ravishing sweetness in this praise, coming from the one source in the world which there could be no gainsaying.

"You two ought to pull in a team," put in Ed. "No theatre standing would hold the audiences that would come to hear you sing together!"

Marana made a gesture of negation with her head. "There shall never be but one Marana," she said proudly, "and she shall be the greatest singer in the world! Behold her!" she added, with a movement of her eyes toward Beatrix "As for me, I sing no more! I have been your audience, mademoiselle; I will never again have an audience of my own!"

"Do not say it—you break my heart!" cried Beatrix; and she glided forward, and took the Russian impetuously in her arms. "Tell her, Ed," she said, half turning to appeal to him, but not letting Marana go. "It is I who shall sing no more; I did it only to help my father and him. This is the last night. If you care for him do not punish his sister. Be yourself again, and be my sister, too!"

Marana drew her head back, and gazed for a moment into the other's eyes. Then she kissed her gravely on both cheeks, and disengaged herself. "You believe, then, that I really love your brother?" she said.

"Yes, indeed! How could you help it?" exclaimed Beatrix warmly.

"And you, monsieur, what have you to say?" continued the other, letting her eyes rest upon him with a certain veiled intensity, the lids half drooped. "Are you also of opinion that you are not indifferent to me?"

"It would take a cleverer man than I am to see through you, Vera," returned the young gentleman naively; "but I don't believe that I could be loving you so much as I do if you didn't love me back."

"But would you marry me, even?"

"Ed's face flushed and his eyes sparkled. "Haven't I shown that I would?" he demanded between his teeth. "Don't make game of me, Vera, unless you mean to be kind afterward!"

She stood looking at him, her head a little bent to the left, her arms hanging down on both sides of her graceful figure. "I mean to be kind to you, my dear," she said finally in a low tone; "more kind than you would think if you knew what I have sometimes been in my life."

"Ed, I am so glad," whispered Beatrix to him in the little pause that followed, but the whisper was tremulous, for a sense of her own forlorness must needs insinuate itself. "You won't forget me, will you?—because I love you, too," she added.

But Ed, who was familiar with the expressions on Marana's face, wore an anxious contraction on his forehead; he drew in his lips and held his breath.

"I had given up expecting love when I met you," she continued, her bosom visibly rising and falling. "I am not going to spoil it, now that it has come. For that, also, you may partly thank your sister. She [illegible] made me feel that it is good to be generous. You have never known me. I showed you only the best; it was true, but it was not all. If I were your wife you would have to know all. I should not mind for myself, but I should not like you to learn that love is less lovely than it seems now—at least not from me. Yesterday you might have married me, but today—no! My memory will be pleasanter to you than I should be after a while. We will say good-by." She put out her left hand toward him and smiled. "Good-by!"

He covered his eyes with the back of his hand. "I can't bear it!" he said in a broken voice.

Marana's inscrutable face quivered for a moment; she seemed to waver; she swayed slightly toward him as she stood; her lips parted and her eyes shone. But then, with a deep breath, she regained her self command. She looked at Beatrix, as much as to say, "You must comfort him." Then she turned, with a sweep of her black dress, moved to the door and opened it. Bellingham and Wallie Dinsmore were just approaching.

"You are late, messieurs," exclaimed Marana in a gay tone. "I have been offering my homage!"

Wallie looked from one to the other of the three, quietly observant. Ed, with his face averted, was putting on his overcoat and hat; he then pulled the brim of the latter over his eyes and went hastily out, looking neither to the right nor left. Beatrix, with one hand resting on the marble dressing table, and her eyes wide open, stood in a sort of trance. She had not yet seen Bellingham. Wallie offered Marana his arm.

"Since you are going, diva," he said, "permit me to escort you. You misunderstood me yesterday morning. Whatever homage I have to offer shall be paid to you."

Bellingham, thus abandoned to his own guidance, strode up to Beatrix, who uttered a cry; it seemed to her as if he had suddenly started up out of the floor. It had been his purpose to make a final appeal to her, and no doubt his words would have been eloquent and moving, and possibly they might have gained him his object, though he would have had to contend against the incomprehensible doubts, hesitations, perversity and pride of a woman who loves, and knows that she is loved, and yet draws back for the sake of something—heaven knows what. But, as it happened, not a syllable of Bellingham's appeal was ever uttered, for before he could open his lips to begin the bell rang which conveyed the order for the curtain to rise on the last act. So he, perceiving that there was no time to lose, simply caught Beatrix in his arms, met her eyes for an instant, and kissed her. After that it was too late for her to draw back, even had she wished to. She went to take her part on the stage, but she left a marguerite in Bellingham's hand.

Such is the private history of that memorable last night, the other details of which have been sufficiently described in the journals of the period. Mrs. Peters is understood to have sailed for Europe a day or two later. Jocelyn disappeared, leaving unsavory traces behind him. Mr. Randolph, senior, returned to his place up the Hudson, where he is occasionally visited by his married daughter. Ed entered the office of the latter's husband in the capacity of clerk, and is doing well. As for Mlle. Marana, the famous prima donna, she has vanished as utterly as if she had never had any existence.

There are two or three persons in New York who are believed to know something about her; there are perhaps a dozen who know enough to look wise when the matter is broached in their presence; there are a hundred or two who have heard a report to the effect that there were some facts connected with her engagement in this city which have never been fully explained, but the great mass of the public have never been at the pains to entertain any misgivings on the subject. They content themselves with looking forward to the time when that most faithful and enterprising of impresarios Gen. Inigo shall once more bring out at his new opera house the great Marana.

THE END.